National Repentance urged from the Proſpect of National Judgments.

A SERMON

PREACH'D at the

Pariſh-Church of ALL-SAINTS

IN

NORTHAMPTON,

On FEBRUARY 6, 1756,

Being the Day appointed by HIS MAJESTY'S PROCLAMATION for the

PUBLICK FAST.

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THE PREFACE.

THE following DISCOURSE *was preach'd to a crouded, attentive Audience; and I hope the Publication of it may be particularly ſeaſonable at this Juncture. The awful Accounts we have receiv'd from Foreign Parts ought to affect every one of us with a deep Concern about Eternal Things, and excite us* * to ſet our Affections on Things above, and not on Things on the Earth. *If ſuch tremendous Viſitations don't awaken Men to*

* Col. iii, 2.

Seriouſneſs, there is little Probability, that any Thing on this Side the Grave will produce that Effect. Surely, it is high Time for us all to ſecure ſomething more ſolid and laſting than this World can afford. We may learn, from the Accounts that have been publiſh'd, how ſlippery and uncertain all Earthly Enjoyments are. In a Moment we may be hurried away from them, and remov'd into Eternity. It is a moſt alarming Conſideration, and ſufficient to rouſe the moſt Careleſs and Lukewarm! How earneſtly ſhould we deſire to obtain the Favour of that Glorious Being, whoſe Power is boundleſs and irreſiſtible. Surely, it is the greateſt Madneſs to ſet Him at Defiance, and provoke his Vengeance and Indignation; ſince He has ſo many Ways of puniſhing obſtinate, incorrigible Offenders. May we rather be perſuaded, humbly and thankfully to accept the Offers of his Grace, tender'd in the Goſpel. We ſhall then ſecure to ourſelves a Kingdom that cannot be mov'd,

* Heb. xii. 28.

mov'd, * an Inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, eternal in the Heavens. *GOD grant, that we may improve all the Diſpenſations of his Providence to our Spiritual and Everlaſting Advantage. The Children of GOD need not fear, tho' the Earth be moved, and the Hills be carried into the Midſt of the Sea. They are ſafe under his Almighty Protection. They may, ſecurely and comfortably, commit all their Concerns unto his unerring Wiſdom, and* † caſt all their Care upon Him, who careth for them. *Tho' they may ſuffer the ſame outward Calamities that others do, they will certainly be ſupported under them, and conducted ſafely into the Haven of Everlaſting Reſt. In the ſharpeſt Trials they may encourage themſelves with the Hope of being ſoon releaſed out of a World of Sin and Sorrow, and receiv'd into a State of uninterrupted Bliſs! How delightful the Proſpect,*

* 1 Pet. i. 4. † 1 Pet. v. 7.

Proſpect, and animating the Hope! May thoſe, who are yet Strangers to ſo great a Bleſſing, be ſtirr'd up earneſtly to ſeek it; and thoſe, who have had a Taſte of it, ſtill deſire and long after higher Attainments, and * preſs forward to the Mark, for the Prize of our High Calling in CHRIST JESUS. *Amen!*

* Phil. iii. 14.

Iſa. xxvi. latter Part of Ver. 9.

For, when thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteouſneſs.

AS * *the Goodneſs of* GOD *does not always lead Men to Repentance*, and diſpoſe them to Returns of Love and Obedience; it is highly neceſſary, that ſharp and ſevere Methods ſhould be uſed, in order to reclaim them from the Paths of Sin and Ruin. If they were not ſometimes puniſh'd in this World for their enormous Crimes, they would be apt to think, either that there was *No* GOD, or, at leaſt, that He took no Notice of Human Affairs, but left Men to live as was moſt agreeable to their own Inclinations. To prevent ſo pernicious a Deluſion,

* Rom. ii. 4.

Deluſion, He, ſometimes, ſends the Meſſengers of his Wrath to alarm a careleſs World, and * *ariſes to ſhake terribly the Earth.* † *He does not, indeed, ſuffer his whole Diſpleaſure to ariſe here*; ‖ *but in Wrath remembers Mercy.* His ſevereſt Diſpenſations are temper'd with Pity and Compaſſion, and are generally intended § *for Reformation, and not for Deſtruction.*

In ſpeaking on the Words of my Text, I propoſe (by the Divine Bleſſing) to ſpecify,

I. Some of thoſe Judgments, with which the Almighty is pleaſed to viſit a wicked World.

II. Take Notice of thoſe which have lately happen'd, or, at this Time, ſeem to threaten us.

III. Shew the Effect which, it may be reaſonably hoped, the Apprehenſion of them may have upon us.

I. Then

* Iſa. ii. 3. † Pſal. lxxviii. 39. ‖ Hab. iii. 2. § 2 Cor. x. 8.

I. THEN I am to ſpecify ſome of thoſe Judgments, with which the Almighty is pleaſed to viſit a wicked World.

THE ſoreſt Temporal Judgments, with which the Almighty uſes to puniſh Mankind, are, the *Plague*, *Famine*, *War*, or an *Earthquake*.

1. THE *Plague* is a Judgment, with which ſome Countries in the World (*Turky* in particular) are frequently viſited; and a terrible Calamity it is! It turns large and populous Cities into Deſarts, and ſpreads Death and Deſtruction on every Side. No Age, or Condition of Life, is exempted from its fatal Darts. The Monarch upon his Throne is equally liable to the deadly Contagion with the meaneſt Beggar. It is now (bleſſed be GOD) near a hundred Years ſince this Calamity has viſited our Coaſts.

2. THE *Famine* is another dreadful Scourge, with which it pleaſes the Moſt High, ſometimes, to chaſtiſe a rebellious

People; and a moſt dreadful Viſitation it is. The Pain it is attended with muſt be grievous and tormenting to the laſt Degree; ſo that People, in ſuch Circumſtances, have been glad to ſatisfy their craving Appetites with the moſt loathſome and offenſive Things; yea, we read, that Mothers have eaten their own Children, when pinch'd with Hunger, as at the Sieges of *Samaria* and *Jeruſalem*. When Men abuſe the Bleſſings of Heaven, and waſte them in Riot and Intemperance; when they don't look up with Gratitude to the Author and Fountain of them, it is no Wonder, if he ſhould with-hold his Bleſſings from thoſe who pervert his gracious Intention. May we, with Moderation and Thankfulneſs, receive theſe outward Communications of the Divine Goodneſs, and not provoke Him to deprive us of them! They are ſent for the Support and Refreſhment of theſe outward Tabernacles, and not to inflame our Luſts and Paſſions. It is a great Reproach to us, not to acknowledge the Hand that feeds us: Even the moſt ſtupid Creatures have ſome Senſe of Gratitude to their Benefactors; for

the

* *the Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib.*

3. *WAR* is another formidable Scourge which the Almighty makes uſe of, and more frequently than either of the former. It ſprings, indeed, from the corrupt Paſſions of Mankind, from *Ambition*, *Covetouſneſs*, *Revenge*, and ſuch like: Nevertheleſs, the Great LORD of the Univerſe executes his own righteous Purpoſes by the Folly and Extravagance of Men. The King of *Aſſyria*, in making War upon the *Jews* and other Nations, aim'd only at extending his Dominions, and getting a great Name in the World. He imputed his Conqueſts and Victories to his own Conduct and Courage; for thus did he vapour and boaſt. † *By the Strength of my Hand I have done it, and by my Wiſdom; for I am prudent; and I have remov'd the Bounds of the People, and have robbed their Treaſures; and I have put down the Inhabitants like a valiant Man.* To confute this vain Boaſt, the LORD ſaith, by his Prophet, ‖ *Shall the Ax boaſt itſelf againſt him that heweth*

 therewith?

* Iſa. i. 3. † Iſa. x. 13. ‖ Iſa. x. 15.

therewith? Or ſhall the Saw magnify itſelf againſt him that ſhaketh it? And again; * *Haſt thou not heard, long ago, how I have done it; and of antient Times, that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to paſs, that thou ſhould'ſt be to lay waſte Cities into ruinous Heaps.* The Great JEHOVAH made uſe of him as an Inſtrument to puniſh the World for their Wickedneſs; tho' that did not excuſe him, as he intended only to gratify a cruel and an ambitious Temper. *War* is not only a great Calamity in itſelf, but alſo attended with many others. What dreadful Havock has the *Sword* made in all Ages of the World! How many Millions have been ſacrificed to its Fury! Children have loſt their Parents, and Parents their Children. Wives have been deprived of their Huſbands, and thereby reduced to grievous Difficulties. How many fruitful Countries have been ravag'd, and flouriſhing Cities deſtroy'd by that terrible Scourge! It is, indeed, big with Miſchief, and the fruitful Source of numberleſs Evils. As it is carried on by the Civilized and more Polite Part of the World, it is a great Calamity;

* Iſa. xxxvii. 26.

Calamity; but much more ſo in barbareus and ſavage Countries, where they allow no Quarter, but deſtroy every Thing with Fire and Sword. Its Ravages are elegantly deſcribed by the Prophet: * *The Land is as the Garden of* Eden *before them, and behind them a deſolate Wilderneſs.*

4. EARTHQUAKES are another terrible Scourge in the Hands of the Almighty, whereby he puniſhes a ſinful World; and indeed, in ſome Reſpects, more terrible than either of the former. The others are more gradual in their Approach, and more ſlow in Execution; but this comes ſuddenly, and without any Warning. In a Moment, perhaps, it overturns, deſtroys, and ſwallows up the Work of Ages. Large Cities, and their Inhabitants, are buried in one common Grave. † *Their Multitude, their Pomp and Glory deſcend into it.* You may, perhaps, eſcape the *Famine*, the *Sword*, and the *Peſtilence*, by removing into ſome other Country, free from thoſe tremendous Scourges; but the *Earthquake* is ſo quick and terrible

* Joel ii. 3. † Iſa. v. 14.

terrible a Meſſenger of Divine Wrath, that it frequently cuts off all Poſſibility of eſcaping.

HAVING thus ſpecified ſome of thoſe Judgments wherewith it pleaſeth GOD to viſit a wicked World, I proceed,

II. To take Notice of thoſe which have lately happen'd, or ſeem now to threaten us.

WE have great Reaſon to bleſs GOD, that this Part of the World has been for a long while free from the *Famine*. We have had Plenty of the Neceſſaries and Conveniencies of Life. The Store-houſes of Heaven have been open'd to ſupply our Wants, and the Divine Bounty has been largely exercis'd towards us, notwithſtanding our Abuſe of his Mercies by Riot and Exceſs. We have been alſo free from the *Plague* for a long Seaſon, if the Diſtemper be excepted which has rag'd among the Cattle, and which (ſhould it continue) will produce diſmal Effects. As to *Earthquakes*, we have heard what terrible Deſtruction they have caus'd in ſome neighbouring Countries, and how many

many Cities and Towns have been ruin'd by them. That Judgment has, as it were, knock'd at our Doors, tho' (bleſſed be GOD!) we have hitherto receiv'd no Damage thereby. But are we ſure it will be always ſo? Are we in general ſo righteous a Nation as to have no Reaſon to apprehend ſuch a Viſitation? I fear not. Rather, does not Iniquity of every Kind greatly abound among us? ſuch as *Curſing* and *Swearing*, *Perjury* without End, *Gluttony*, *Drunkenneſs*, *Adultery*, *Fornication*, *Sabbath-breaking*, *Contempt of the Goſpel*, &c. Do we ſuppoſe that the *Portugueſe* and others were greater Sinners than we are, becauſe they ſuffer'd ſuch Things? Nay; but, * *except we repent, we ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* There is one Circumſtance which extenuates their Sins, and greatly aggravates ours; *that is*, they are debar'd, by the Wickedneſs of their crafty Prieſts, from reading the Scriptures, whereby they might know the Way of Salvation: But, on the contrary, we may read them, no Man forbidding us; and if we neglect ſo precious a Privilege, it is our

* Luke xiii. 5.

our own Sin and Shame. Now, it is an adjudg'd Caſe, * *That he, who knoweth his Maſter's Will, and doth it not, ſhall be beaten with many Stripes.*

As to *War*, we ſeem to be upon the Brink of entering upon one with a Nation that is very powerful, ſubtle, and perfidious, in Defence of our Rights and Poſſeſſions, and to oppoſe their unreaſonable Claims and Encroachments. We may, indeed, hope, from the Juſtice of our Cauſe, for the Divine Bleſſing in the Proſecution of it; becauſe (whatever ſome People may think) it is GOD who giveth Victory in the Battle; and, without his Bleſſing, the Bravery and Number of our Forces will little avail. We muſt not truſt (tho' it is right to make uſe of it) in an *Arm of Fleſh*, but in the LIVING GOD. If we ſecure his Favour, we ſhall humble and conquer our inſolent Enemies; but if GOD (for our Sins) ſhould ſuffer them to prevail over us, I tremble to think of the Conſequences. In that Caſe *Popery* and *Slavery* will pour in upon us like a Flood; our LIBERTIES

* Luke xii. 47.

LIBERTIES will be trampled upon, and ſubjected to *Arbitrary Power*; and our HOLY RELIGION give Place to the groſſeſt *Superſtition* and *Idolatry*. We muſt worſhip *Images* *, and a *Piece of Bread* †, or *old Relicks*; uſe a *Language*, in Publick Worſhip, which few underſtand; go on *Pilgrimage* to the *Shrines* of *pretended* Saints; with a great deal of other Trumpery; or elſe be condemned to a lingering, tormenting Death: For ſuch has been the Spirit of *Popery*, whenever it hath been arm'd with ſufficient Strength to extirpate thoſe whom they account *Hereticks*. May GOD defend us from ſo dreadful a Calamity!

III. and *laſtly*, I am to point out the Effect which, it may be reaſonably hoped, the Apprehenſion of theſe Judgments may have upon us.

THE Text informs us, that, *when the Judgments of GOD are abroad in*

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* That the Worſhip of Images is one Part of the *Romiſh* Religion is ſo notorious, that there is no Need of producing any Proof of it.

† *i. e.* the *Hoſt*.

the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteouſneſs. They are ſent for that gracious Purpoſe. The Deſign of them is to alarm and terrify careleſs Sinners, and ſtir them up to a Concern for their eternal Salvation. A long Courſe of Proſperity is apt to corrupt and ſenſualize the Tempers of Men. Eaſe and Abundance too often make them remiſs and negligent as to their immortal Intereſts. In the Hiſtory of the Children of *Iſrael* we read, that whenever they were free from outward Troubles for any conſiderable Time, they ran into *Idolatry* and other Abominations: When they ſmarted for their Wickedneſs, * *they cried unto the LORD, and He delivered them out of their Diſtreſs.* When they relapſed into their former Sins, the ſame, or ſome other Calamity was ſent to bring them back to their GOD. In like Manner, we are met together this Day, in Obedience to Thoſe who are ſet over us, to humble ourſelves for our own Sins, and thoſe of our Country, and to implore the Divine Compaſſion and Forbearance towards

* Pſal. cvii. 19.

towards us. As many, now preſent, were not at Church when the Proclamation was read on * *Sunday* Morning, I think it will not be improper to read it again, as it may be a Means of enforcing what I have now deliver'd.

" WHEREAS the manifold Sins " and Wickedneſs of theſe " Kingdoms have moſt juſtly deſerved " heavy and ſevere Puniſhments from " the Hand of Heaven; and the " Almighty, out of his great Mercy, " hath not only been our Defence in " Times of Danger, but hath pro- " tected and preſerved us from immi- " nent Deſtruction, eſpecially at this " Time, when ſome neighbouring " Countries, in Alliance and Friendſhip " with us, have been viſited with a moſt " dreadful and extenſive Earthquake, " which hath alſo, in ſome Degree, been " felt in ſeveral Parts of our Dominions: " And whereas the preſent Situation of " Publick Affairs (as to the Iſſue of " them) is of the higheſt Importance

* I hope all, who deſire to keep the Sabbath-Day holy, will attend Divine Worſhip in the Morning, as well as Afternoon, if not unavoidably hinder'd.

" to the Peace and Safety of theſe
" Kingdoms, to our Commerce and
" Liberty, and, above all, to the moſt
" valuable Bleſſing of the Proteſtant
" Religion: We, from the deepeſt
" Senſe of this our State, and of the
" Miſeries which our People would
" ſuffer, if a like Viſitation ſhould be
" ſhew'd forth upon theſe Kingdoms,
" and placing our whole Truſt and
" Confidence in the Mercy of Al-
" mighty GOD, have reſolved, that a
" General and Publick Faſt be obſer-
" ved, that both We and our People
" may humble ourſelves before Al-
" mighty GOD, and, in a moſt devout
" and ſolemn Manner, ſend up our
" Prayers and Supplications to the
" Divine Majeſty, to avert all theſe
" Judgments which we moſt juſtly
" have deſerved, to continue his Mer-
" cies, and to perpetuate the Enjoy-
" ment of the Proteſtant Religion
" among us, and Safety and Proſperity
" to our Kingdoms; and to implore
" his Protection and Bleſſing upon our
" Fleets and Armies."

I HOPE that we are aſſembled together this Day with a Diſpoſition of Mind, in ſome Degree, ſuitable to the awful and important Occaſion of it. In order hereunto, it is neceſſary for us, not only to abſtain from our uſual Food and Refreſhment *, but, more eſpecially, to be deeply humbled for our Sins; be determin'd (by his Grace) to forſake them, and pray for Mercy and Forgiveneſs, through Faith in our Gracious Redeemer. As the National Wickedneſs is very great, and Infidelity in Principle, as well as open Profaneneſs in Practice, ſadly prevail amongſt us; there ſeems to be a Neceſſity for a National Repentance, in order to avert National Judgments. * *Shall I not viſit for theſe Things, ſaith the* LORD? *Shall not my Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?* are Words, which (it is to be fear'd) are applicable to us: The Scripture denounces the heavieſt Woes and Judgments againſt thoſe who perſiſt in a ſinful Courſe; but it contains many comfortable

* So far as is conſiſtent with Health.

† Jer. v. 9.

comfortable Promiſes to thoſe who repent of, and forſake, their evil Ways. As, * *Come, let us reaſon together, ſaith the* LORD; *tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they ſhall be white as Snow; tho' they be red like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool.* Or, † *Let the Wicked forſake his Ways, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and let him return unto the* LORD, *and He will have Mercy upon him; and to our* GOD, *and He will abundantly pardon.* ‖ *We have an Advocate with the* FATHER, JESUS CHRIST *the Righteous,* who once died to atone for our Sins, and now § *ever liveth to make Interceſſion for us*; and, if we approach Him with penitent, contrite Hearts, and an humble Dependance on his Merits, we ſhall be made happy Partakers of his Love and Favour here, and of everlaſting Bliſs and Joy hereafter. May all Orders and Degrees of Men amongſt us ‡ *remember themſelves, and be turned unto the* LORD. It is incumbent upon Magiſtrates to put the Laws in Execution againſt Vice and Immorality, according

* Iſa. i. 18. † *Ibid.* lv. 7. ‖ 1 John, ii. 1. § Heb. vii. 25. ‡ Pſalm xxii. 27.

according to their ſolemn Obligations; and all of us, in our ſeveral Stations, promote the Intereſts of Virtue and Religion. We ſhould ſend up our fervent Prayers to the Almighty, that He would be pleas'd to pour down a Spirit of Repentance and Reformation upon the Inhabitants of this Land. That is the moſt effectual Method to ſecure the Divine Protection; for, as * *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation*, ſo *Sin is the Reproach*, and (if not repented of) will be the Ruin of any People. It is ſo by a natural, neceſſary Effect, as well as by the juſt Judgment of GOD. It is in the Body Politick, as in the Natural Body. As Debauchery and Exceſs deſtroy the Health, and bring deadly Diſeaſes upon the one; ſo they weaken, impair, and ruin the other. A Friend of Religion is a Friend to his Country, and draws down the Bleſſing of Heaven upon it; but a wicked Man, an Enemy to Religion, is an Enemy to his Country, and draws down the Curſe and Diſpleaſure of Heaven upon it. If, therefore, we have any Regard to our own Happineſs, and

* Prov. xiv. 34.

and the Welfare and Proſperity of our Country, let us walk and live as becometh the Goſpel of CHRIST. Let us * *put away the Evil of our Doings*, and with one Heart, and one Voice, glorify the GOD of our Salvation. It is highly reaſonable that we ſhould all do ſo, moſt conducive to our preſent and eternal Happineſs. GOD will make a remarkable Difference betwixt thoſe who fear and ſerve him, and thoſe who fear him not; moſt certainly in the next Life, tho' not always in this. † *The Righteous will ſhine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, and the Workers of Iniquity be thruſt into outer Darkneſs.* All the Divine Judgments in this Life are mix'd with Mercy; but hereafter, thoſe, who die in an impenitent State, will have || *Judgment without Mercy.* May we all, then, earneſtly ſeek Acceptance and Reconciliation to GOD, through the Merits of our Redeemer, who died to ſave us from the Wrath of GOD, and make us eternally happy in his bliſsful Preſence. O let us fly unto him for Refuge. Let us receive him by a lively Faith,

* Iſa. i. 16. † Matt. xii. 43. || James ii. 13.

Faith, and our Sins ſhall be waſh'd away in his precious Blood. By his infinitely meritorious Righteouſneſs we ſhall be juſtified from the Guilt of Sin, and, by the Operation of his Bleſſed Spirit, we ſhall be purg'd from the Defilement of it. We are all earneſtly invited to accept of thoſe Bleſſings. They are purchaſed for us by an invaluable Price. The Ranſom paid for our Souls can't be eſtimated by Men or Angels *. The Eternal Son of GOD ſubmitted to die a moſt painful and ignominious Death, that we might be happy for ever. Through Him we may come unto GOD with an humble Confidence of obtaining Mercy, notwithſtanding our manifold Sins and heinous Provocations. CHRIST has made full Satisfaction to his injur'd Juſtice, and abundantly honour'd the Divine Law, by his own perfect Obe-

 dience.

* 'Twas to reconcile *(ſays a celebrated Writer)* the Divine Juſtice and Mercy, that the Great *Emanuel* deſcended upon Earth, and ſhew'd, by his Sufferings (in our ſtead) the infinite Averſion of the Moſt High to the Violation of Order. He could not pardon the Criminal without teſtifying his Abhorrence of the Crime; all the Heavenly Spirits adore the Depth of this Myſtery!

dience. May the Conſideration of his dying Love conſtrain us to ſeek an Intereſt in Him, without which we cannot be ſav'd! May it ſweetly captivate our Affections, and conquer our ſtubborn Wills! Then ſhall we pay a free, chearful Obedience to his righteous Commands. It will be our Meat and Drink to do his Holy and Heavenly Will, and glorify Him in Time, and in Eternity. Sin will be hateful to us, and pierce us with Anguiſh and Sorrow, whenever we give Place to the Enemy of our Souls, who * *walketh about like a roaring Lyon, ſeeking whom he may devour*. It is impoſſible to obtain any ſolid Comfort, even in this Life, 'till we are poſſeſs'd of an Intereſt in the Merits of CHRIST, and the Favour of GOD. Nothing elſe can fill the Deſire of the Soul, or impart any real, permanent Satisfaction. But, when we experience thoſe Bleſſings, we ſhall have ſuch a Fund of Joy and Comfort, as nothing in this World can interrupt or deſtroy. Even Afflictions will loſe their Sting, and be the Means of our Eſtabliſhment and Growth

* 1 Pet. v. 8.

Growth in Grace. We ſhall be more and more transform'd into his Image, and, at laſt, made meet for a happy, glorious Eternity.

NOW to the King Eternal, Immortal, Inviſible, the only Wiſe GOD, be Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The END.

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